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Paradigms and Conceptual Metamorphoses in the Relation Homo Oeconomicus vs. Homo Academicus

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Abstract

The subject of this paper aims to present in a “sui generis” manner a point of view on the relationship between two models of the social-human typology: Homo Oeconomicus and Homo Academicus. Reviewing some of the most approved views on theoretical and conceptual aspects, the limits of the two human types presented are not exhaustive, but is a starting point that can answer to questions like: “How far can go the convergence between academics and economics?”, “There are constraints or favorite elements in the relationship between Homo Oeconomicus and Homo Academicus?” Study approach, developed by the hypothesis (“Education fuels economy and shaping the society”) to the conclusion (Homo Academicus is deeply involved in Mundus Oeconomicus, while Homo Oeconomicus stimulates a comprehensive way across Mundus Academicus), generate different approaches of paradigms and metamorphosis of the two human types analyzed, leading inevitably to shape postulate that humanity cannot ignore the "Development through Innovation, Innovation through Education" and that leads to an absolutely justified interrogation for the globalized present: Will be able Homo Academicus to adapt to the values of Homo Oeconomicus, sell its know-how and produce conveniently?

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1. Introduction

As is well-known, homo oeconomicus and homo academicus are expressions of a modern civilization that has managed to become more self-aware (Nomen est Omen! – The Name is the Man!).

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Today, the modern man is not aware of history or his own history. Whoever believes that history includes only the past and its works is wrong because the ubiquitous reality is not only “alpha” or “omega,” but “caput mundi.” Today, the man himself is reported not only at the level of tribe, community or civilization, but is reported globally and universally; following the flow of information which has exponentially expanded the social sphere, teaching him to self-promote, to cultivate and to expand typology. The reason that we are witnessing the fragmentation of current civilization in favor of the adoption of unique values is due to the fact of typologies transmission from one community and one civilization to another. Will Man be able to function better in social terms as part of a uniform structure of meanings or will multipolarity destroy him? Transmission of social patterns can only be closer to the social individuals, communities and civilizations, to create a unique environment in which to develop.

From all the literature put forward by examination of the two human types, one feature is that the components of each can be expanded and extended to the other, although not always and not just in any way. This is because between the "requiem" for homo oeconomicus and the "atavistic" metamorphosis of homo academicus, there looms an unavoidable "conflagration" of compromise: the bidirectional transfer to the individual personality of a multipolar DNA, that is an unpredictable alloy between (eco) NOMOS and (aca) DEMOS. In the context of globalization this operation of the transfer is "live": each of the two is an extension of the other in its own entity which establishes and configures its NOMOS of the DEMOS’ perspective.

2. Dilemmas and paradoxes

2.1. Homo Oeconomicus: total man or caricature?

Homo oeconomicus embodies a set of descriptive and normative idiosyncratic theorems fit to the trends of the natural and social reality, which gives rise to a concept, particularly circumscribed by social reality, which underlies his particular way of describing and explaining economic realities. From the total man of Adam Smith to Mill's homo oeconomicus, to the homo oeconomicus computans of Jevons and Edgeworth, to homo oeconomicus moralistic or behavioralis, our character gradually weakened (became more absent) during the nineteenth century. The Smithean man is a complex mixture of preferences, talents, inclinations and motivations, all grafted onto personal interest; he is total man (Pohoata, 2011, pp.81-82), caught in the framework of a quintuple perfection: perfectly rational, perfectly selfish, perfectly free, perfectly competitive, perfectly social (Popescu, 2009, pp.184-185).

It is almost universally considered that the main characteristic of homo oeconomicus is his rationality, but the concept is evolving. If we consider only this side, rationality in economics is only applying personal interest, and then we can see two serious consequences: internal consistency and reasonableness election decision-making procedures. As we know, the marginal revolution has placed economic choice (especially between goods) in the centre of economic behaviour. However, while Jevons was concerned in his analysis about how these decisions are taken, the nature of these decisions has received little attention from him. Beyond that, Jevons' exposure was limited: there was no way to choose between equal utility and valued goods. Although Jevons’ "mathematical" hypostasis of homo oeconomicus is widely accepted as the basis of neoclassical economics in the twentieth century, not all marginalist economists have followed the path of the utilitarianism or mathematical version of the new homo oeconomicus (Schabas, 1990). By making choices at the expense of dominant wishes, economists of the twentieth century have allowed homo oeconomicus to have any motivation, allowing him to choose rationally, in other words, to become homo oeconomicus rationalis.

In more recent years, it has become apparent that homo oeconomicus rationalis is not as strong a character as the economists of the 1970s believed. It seems that, following laboratory results from experimental economics and game theory, economists have found good reasons to think that the definition of the rationality and consistency of homo oeconomicus could be relaxed and loosened. These widespread developments still take
**homo oeconomicus rationalis** as ideal model, but then analyze what the effect might be on the experimental results, if he, homo oeconomicus, would not be as perfectly rational as pictured.

Secondly, it seems that with the old economic issues (competition, markets, general equilibrium theory, etc.) rationality on its own will not get one very far. As Knight (1941) pointed out and as is recently argued by Arrow (1986), the individual rationality of homo oeconomicus must be combined with other basic principles (dogmas or doctrines) of modern economy (e.g. other assumptions for perfect competition and general equilibrium) to obtain stronger results, even though the justification for this characterization was its ability to provide accurate analytical results. Third, attempts to use a human individual as a rational representative agent to support macroeconomic theory has been proven to be an incorrect conception (Kirman, 1992). Finally, attempts were made to change the basic characterization of the rationality of homo oeconomicus, but, paradoxically, it cannot be dissociated from the moral, psycho-behavioural analysis of the individual (Sen, 1977; Simon, 1976).

Utilitarian theory seems to be very important in determining the moral, immoral or amoral character of homo oeconomicus. Utilitarianism, initiated officially by Jeremy Bentham, restructured from its classical form by John Stuart Mill, adopts a consequential perspective, according to which a good deed is not defined by the intentions behind its origin or the purpose pursued by the agent, but by its effects or consequences (Scarre, 1996). Regardless of utilitarian calculations, economics as a whole, through its representatives, accredits as an overarching idea that people are motivated by their own welfare when taking economic measures. It is a well-known image of homo oeconomicus that describes the entity as concerned with the maximization of rational self-interest. However, economic behaviour is more complex than this statement suggests because people have different motivations that determine their choices whether rationally or irrationally (sometimes under uncertainty) or their economic actions in relation to a moral – immoral antithesis (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

Economy does not pretend that purposeful rationality (maximize your wealth) is the only feature of human action. It also recognizes the human being as a moral being, a creature able to distinguish right from wrong, but morality does not have a purely economic meaning. Moral attitudes (broadly understood) not only motivate the behaviour of homo oeconomicus, but it also empowers them. Therefore, homo oeconomicus is amoral because his actions have universal applicability (Dierksmeier & Pirson, 2009) and are motivated by the needs in the lower level of Maslow's hierarchy. In this regard the concept of homo oeconomicus, representing the HOW against the WHAT, must include actions with broad applicability.

In characterizing the human self as essentially selfish and his rationality enslaved by the passions described by Hume, neoclassicism effectively addresses ethical irrational behaviour. This is a contrast between predominantly selfish rational behaviour and irrational altruism, which is again a paradox! But Sen is not ready to accept this. Intermediate relations located between concern for self and concern for others are ignored. There are groups acting as intermediaries between the person and society as a whole, each relying on the loyalty of its members in such a way that the relationship between personal sacrifice and personal fulfillment is a matter more complicated than that permitted by a narrow selfishness. Thus, for Sen (1988), the real issue is "whether there is a multitude of reasons, or, if self-interest is the only one that leads human beings" (p.19). In our opinion, however, as long as altruism corresponds to internalized externalities and the autonomy of an individual is, in fact, the ability to self-constraint (that is, the prioritization of preferences which is not only determined by their inclination), even under the assumption of maximizing profit with minimum resources, homo oeconomicus cannot be viewed as immoral because morality is not an economic constraint. This does not exclude immoral actions in certain contexts.

This leads to the psychological economy and behavioural economics that is concerned with how systematic differences in the actions of those *hominis oeconomici* (operated by three factors: limited rationality, limited personal interest and concept of marginal utility) influence human behaviour in general and the ethical in particular by the famous abnormalities decision (Elster, 1998). Whatever model is proposed, whether holographic, magnetic resonance imaging, cloning or other methods of experimental research, behavioural economics suggests that the homo oeconomicus model can be detected in two types, depending on the rules of fairness and altruism, but excludes the assertion that people are able to correctly calculate the consequences of
decisions taken; in both cases, the level of rationality is significantly lower, but never subject to unethical
decisions (Loewenstein, 1992).

Can homo oeconomicus be considered a total man? One attempt as least has been made to answer this. Of
course, looking at the above and based on systematic reviews presented in the literature (Dixon, 2010) the
affirmative answer may seem bold, perhaps subjective. Perfection of the individual and thus of the human models
he created them or who joined discussed various registries, multidisciplinary, was not confirmed by anyone. In
contrast, imperfection seems much closer to the truth. If we look at Adam Smith and the image he created for our
character, total man would have enough arguments. Evolution of the concept, the idea, the abstraction, and finally
the model of homo oeconomicus and the undeniable presence quota complicates things, and our character is more
"scar", not lack of affection and impeccability. Our character, as it developed, had the non posse mori and not
posse non mori; in other words, he did not have the instruments necessary to oppose the changes that were
imposed on him by the very same environment that created him. Homo oeconomicus cannot be a total man, as
Adam Smith outlined perfectly, but rather is a whole man.

However, can homo oeconomicus be considered, in its entirety, a caricature? Considering the truth that a
caricature based on the artist's subjective vision which not only simplifies but is based on distortion or
exaggeration of certain features beyond objective truth, we are obliged to recognize that it is this distortion or
exaggeration that allows us to recognize the true significance of the exaggerated characteristic. The same is true
for homo oeconomicus. He is not only a simplification of man, as all models of homines are, but he is also a
caricature, because it is reduced to the essential features of economic behaviour. As the caricature appeared and
evolved gradually from one generation to another, economists became less concerned with real-life
representation model elements and more concerned with his idealization to emphasize the role/roles in economic
theory. Once economists had a more accurate representation, or more concrete description of homo oeconomicus,
they were free to choose a more subjective perspective in portraying their favourite character. This caricature
model of the man that economists have portrayed, is what helps them to learn about idealized theoretical
economy, and they do this because it allows them to explore human economic behaviour and its consequences in
different (exaggerated or not) forms. This abstracted model, the caricature of homo oeconomicus, seems strange
and sometimes ridiculous to other social science researchers, but a paradox was needed; this is precisely why
economists, in their model apology, argue that the success of analytical comparisons becomes exactly the same
representatives of social sciences when they include the homo oeconomicus model in their work. And the
paradox goes further: compared analytically, homo oeconomicus becomes malleable and transforms itself by way
of that research because, if it were so inflexible, it would not be able to be a good model worthy of consideration.
Although economists have come to depend on their caricature, the dilemma’s essential response (total man or
caricature?) is clear: no one can deny the value of caricature in building an accurate picture.

2.2. Homo academicus: between archetypal image and sociological anthropology

Although some historians, even ethnographers, have often wondered why there are consistent, systematic
considerations related to this concept, based on the origin and evolution of it we find that the failure is
paradoxical the more so because, as Harold Perkin notes, comprising academics is the key model for all homines:
the homo academicus professional launches all others (Rothblatt, 2006).

Specifically, the syntagma homo academicus is found in the form that we use it today, only in the last century,
when the famous sociologist Pierre Bourdieu entitled one of his works, a book published in 1984, only using that
syntagma: Homo Academicus. Since then and until today the term has been used either in marginal comments on
that paper or in the subsequent approach of higher education and its many angles of analysis of the contemporary
period (a period of Urbi et Orbi academic education expansion), where it meets the invariably English
correspondent of the syntagma, The Academic Man, also the name of a book written by Logan Wilson in 1995
“The Academic Man - A Study in the Sociology of a Profession” and his analysis is also in sociological register.
Although the syntagma homo academicus has not yet found a place of honour among its counterparts in other areas or the taxonomic inventory of homines, paradoxically or not, we speak rather of multiple representatives of the "family" of homo academicus: it is homo discens (teaching man, man who represent the human capacity to learn and assimilate through education) and homo educanus (man who is educated, studious man, one who instructs man as representative of human needs of education before they reach adulthood), but also homo grammaticus (the learner, pupil, student, apprentice school), homo imitans (who learns by imitation from an educator), homo investigans (researcher man, curious, endowed with the ability to learn by inference), homo creator (creator man, endowed with the capacity to be creative), homo noeticus (man endowed with the ability to think), homo universalis (universal man, who has many and varied knowledge) and, of course, homo sapiens (wise man, smart man); all of them are brought into question, especially when talking about the history of higher education and academia, and their role in human society. We should not overlook the fact that another paradox occurs when we talk about homo academicus and his beginning: can his manifestation be considered as belonging to a profession? Does he belong to a statistical inventory or to administrative jobs? Or is homo academicus a model that requires mission by vocation?

Bourdieu's theoretical framework explores the active relationship between the individual and his social environment (Grenfell 2004). Relationship capital is crucial if homo academicus' academic strength and power is derived from intellectual academic capital (hierarchy of institutional management) and intellectual capital (scientific reputation based on research) (Kloot, 2009). The relationship between habitus, fields and capital is not a symbolic one, because the interconnections between them led to the differentiation of economic capital (which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights) from the cultural capital (which is convertible, under certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications) and the social (which refers to social connections and may be convertible, under certain conditions, into economic capital and institutionalized in the form of titles of nobility) (Bourdieu, 1988). Homo academicus includes all three forms of capital:

- Cultural - the distribution of knowledge and information, education and its official qualifications, skills development and writing of books and other cultural activities
- Economic - through participation in various research grants and their direct applicability in the economy
- Social - through social connections, family or in different communities and individual forms of prestige or reputation

Applying Bourdieu's theory to the homo academicus model led to the concept of academic habitus which converges in interactions between cultural, academic, intellectual, social and economic capital. Systematically, Bourdieu was wondering if it is reasonable to apply economic laws in different environments, such as the academic, in time and space. Every time, he responded not only by critical epistemological and methodological assumptions of the anthropological theory of rational choice, but more importantly, the conceptualization of economic theory in defining various forms of academic habitus capital (Hirsch, Stuart & Friedman, 1990, pp.42-44; Lindenberg, 1990, p.733).

3. Homo Oeconomicus and Homo Academicus: are they dependent, independent or independent?

Reiterating the statement in the beginning of our approach, we can ask whether we participate effectively in requiem or metamorphosis? Who and what borrows from the other? Both are developed and are problematic and paradoxical, but they fail to align themselves, as they are sometimes symbiotic, sometimes opposite; so that, regardless of how they have been shaped and re-shaped, sized and re-sized, abstracted and materialized, individualized or generalized, the one or the other have represented humanity in theses and antitheses in various ways that we have tried to describe in our approach, and to summarize as follows:
The concept of homo oeconomicus places emphasis on individualistic preferences, while the concept of homo academicus emphasizes the concepts of habitus, capital and social norms.

Homo oeconomicus is unencumbered or unrestricted by any personal relationships (and can maximize profits even under selfishness or altruism) while homo academicus is more interdependent (he not only self-educated but has a mission to educate).

Homo oeconomicus oscillates between perfectly rational decisions and irrationality, while homo academicus subscribes to ontology in which rationality is sine qua non, but that does not necessarily mean a purely rational constitution.

Homo oeconomicus is driven by self-interest (sometimes in the manner ... aut Caesar aut nihil!), while homo academicus tries to fulfill its social role, with maximum responsibility toward all men.

Like homo oeconomicus, homo academicus is not purely self-interested, neither perfectly rational, and is driven by social forces that are often beyond its ability to control.

As with homo oeconomicus, homo academicus cannot avoid philosophical problems, and this is a first critical point. For example, how could homo academicus reconcile self-interest and his social role? When homo academicus struggles with self-interest and the obligations of its role and its mission, what will he choose, and how will his choice be classified? Since homo academicus cannot have only selfish interests, or not to as great a degree as homo oeconomicus, his behaviour is more complex. Being an over-socialized character, he seems overwhelmingly driven by rules. He does not deviate from his character's morality to a greater degree than homo oeconomicus, yet still retains the freedom to act in a self-interested manner when it is outside of the academic community; this is because there seems to be no criterion to ascertain how homo academicus makes choices between rules and individual interests. Another critical point is the ability to offer two explanations for economic interactions, namely academic. Can they do it better than each does for its own field? Sociologists have examined classical economics, neoclassical economics, the new institutionalist economics, economics of transaction cost and sociological anthropology, advancing the idea that with only a few exceptions, people's behaviour is profoundly affected by social relations, but that economic actions are embedded in social relations. However, homo academicus, as a sociological construct, is more complex than homo oeconomicus, and it is therefore difficult to outline his behaviour.

From this point of view, the two homines seem not to have a conciliatory relationship because the axiomatic roots of socio-economics consist in the personal interest of each individual, regardless of his identity. The powerful nature of homo oeconomicus is inconsistent with the concept of homo academicus, where the man and his concern for society are inseparable. And while sociology is concerned with the role and identity of the man, the economy, on the other hand, is not. Economics does not offer philosophical notions of what man is. While homo oeconomicus is considered as the whole man, homo academicus is a superior man. Notwithstanding this, without minimizing the value of each, their descriptions and supporting arguments have changed over time, transforming each of the hominess, and both have survived, being adapted by the real world under the imperatives of globalization, whether individually or by certain levels of confluence.

Oscillating between neo-liberal economic concepts and historical academic traditions, invariably adapting to changes imposed by new global socio-economic realities under the impression of multiculturalism and the interactions of legislation, strategies, visions and macro-structural trends, the two homines multiplied new paradigms and concepts. Placed within the myriad possibilities of the event horizon, with both forward and backward conceptualization permanently oriented to history and the future, they must behave intrinsically in masks. And nobody can say they lack the sacrifice of the essence of globalism (phenomenology, ideology, existential reality) requiring a human manifestation intermixture today, a plenipotentiary mundus oeconomicus. The path of Platon’s Academy from magistrorum Universitas et scholarium (community of professors and students) to multiversity, open university and e-learning has known the reactions of Humboldtian or Cardinal Newman’s transformations in the 19th century, that still remain structurally defining (Stromquist et al., 2007).
The biography of academic education, dotted with medieval paradigms and mechanisms that trigger archetypal roles in a typical scholastic University, under the influence of homo oeconomicus’ fierce manifestation, re-designed functions and roles for the modernized University, revealed in new paths and borders for mundus academicus. A very subtle change takes place in the world, where earlier national and cultural roles of higher education were eclipsed by “economic reason”. Roles are reversed or coexist peacefully, so that homo oeconomicus preaching “time and no time” the authorial prescribed recipe for omnia erga Universitatis (to preserve, develop and streamline their role at a local university, multiversity) and re-create the homo academicus into mundus academicus. Being redefined with an implacable symbiotic destiny (homo academicus provides solutions, homo oeconomicus implements them) requires that the academic world not only to responds to changes, but also to initiates them (Pohoata & Hâlăngescu, 2012).

Thus, in the relationship homo oeconomicus vs. homo academicus, simplistically we would say that the first does not understand the other: homo oeconomicus cannot understand the concept of power or to absorb cultural capital concepts, cultural reproduction or academic habitus; however, in magnificence and self-sufficiency, he sees mundus academicus as the engine of economic growth, and homo academicus sometimes as rigid but splendid in his tenacity to handle this engine. And the secret of this tenacity lies in increasing the strength of his ability to transfer research into industry, inventions and patents and to generate new ones. And this is where mundus academicus assimilates in a win-win manner the attribute of “innovation engine” and the ability to commercialize research, offering wider economy and society multibeneficial results. And what is clear is that, currently, homo academicus is heavily involved in mundus oeconomicus, while homo oeconomicus stimulates the whole mundus academicus (Pohoata & Hâlăngescu, 2012).

4. Conclusions

The conceptual construction of this paper was to outline the profiles of two socio-human types, in terms of how they have been shaped, sized, interpreted and re-interpreted by several economists or sociologists. We have seen that economic thinking, sometimes accordant, sometimes opposite, has designed the main subject of study - the homo oeconomicus and its actions - in a wide range of analysis as a representative of a community-led tranche of economic principles that coexist in an evolving mix of classic to neo-classical utilitarianism, from marginalism and the radicalism of metaphysical realism, objectivity and logical positivism, to ethical egoism and metaphysical libertarianism.

The doctrinal supremacy of the individual that rationally maximizes their individual utility, was maintained in the universal image of man, but it was not free from mutations in the realm of other Humanities disciplines. Producing and consuming, homo oeconomicus has been the workhorse in the history of political economy since its introduction in the area of doctrine by Adam Smith. In today’s times, the profile was supplemented with quasi-psychic faculties, a monadic vehicle capable of advanced utility calculations that can be improved by them, stripped of all historical contamination, emptied of all material specifications, and so abstract and general that invariably would be applicable everywhere, for everyone and at all times.

Homo oeconomicus is the acrobat of mundus oeconomicus, an acrobat who performs favourite acrobatics - supply and demand - in the trapezius of econometrics, and is not always sure that the safeguard of welfare may provide him with the comfort of rational choice, because it can help him ignore his inclinations, dispositions and preferences: it is driven or limited by the theory of moral sentiments or ophelimity; he is paradoxical and dilemmatic and becomes an idea, a caricature and contingent reality. He is now more present in behavioural economics. Imperceptibly he turned into a selfish but rational actor, driven by a natural desire to acquire, at any cost, as much possible, and what began as a theoretical model was completed in a true economic anthropology, sociology and psychology: homo oeconomicus became a whole man.

His colleague from our analysis, homo academicus, has not experienced the same journey. Although from the idealized image of humanistic philosophy until today, experts were presented with a bearable dilemma: does it
manifest in a profession, belong to a statistical inventory or administrative jobs, or ontology of a mission by vocation? As we pointed out, the Humboldtian vision or that of Cardinal Newman have almost bipolarized the diachronic approach of his socio-human profile, although these concept postulates did not give us an in-depth or complete picture. The portrait took shape through the perspective of sociological considerations, and these considerations have proved that homo academicus is the superior man, as one providing solutions to all others, so that he is primus inter pares.

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